

I was born in North Carolina to Black parents. At the time of my birth, my father was attending North Carolina A&T for his Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering and my mother had recently graduated from Howard Law School. When I was two, we moved to Rhode Island, and I lived there until my parents separated. My father remained in Rhode Island, and my mother moved to Oklahoma with my 5-year-old brother and me (9 years old at the time). My family immediately felt the financial impact of my parents' separation. My mother was no longer able to work as a lawyer as she was not licensed in Oklahoma, nor was she able to find work as a paralegal. Instead, she moved through numerous odd jobs before being hired by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services as a social worker for adults.

The financial and social situation of my family brought with it many challenges during childhood, from which I have learned to be adaptable and resourceful. At the same time, I witnessed the financial and social inequities experienced by the Black community as a whole. I spent much of my childhood in Tulsa, Oklahoma, one of the most racially segregated cities in America. This segregation in combination with deliberate financial destruction, has caused a distinct K-12 educational experience for Black youth. As I moved through education, I noticed the disturbing socioeconomic and racial trends in education, and I witnessed my teachers interacting with me and other students in an overtly racially biased manner. Consequently, I learned to take ownership of my education and to work independently of others' perceptions.

During high school, I took ownership of my education by applying to OSSM, a 2-year publicly funded boarding high school for students interested in STEM. I was fortunate to be accepted, and I was finally able to study in a rigorous academic environment. Once again, I experienced racism and classism as the only student of Black American heritage, as well as one of few from a low-income household. After graduating high school, I attended Carnegie Mellon University to study mathematics, and the socioeconomic and racial educational trends I witnessed before were once again evident; thus, the school was not a good fit, and I left after two years.

Time away from school allowed me to reflect on my educational experiences and formulate new goals. While working full-time within retail banking, I worked diligently to improve my mental health and alter my approach to education. Through improving my mental health, I became fascinated with the field of psychology and then psychiatry. I also became aware of the lack of representation Black Americans have within health care and how this impacted my family's experiences. I then found my new career goal, to become a psychiatrist.

I then worked diligently to return to school. I was once again made aware of how great a privilege education is, as I had trouble affording colleges due to my low GPA and socioeconomic status. After two years, I was ultimately able to enroll at McDaniel College as a psychology major. As a rising senior, I am finally thriving both academically and socially, and I am grateful for the supportive professors, administrators, and peers I have encountered at McDaniel.

I also feel quite fortunate to be afforded the opportunity to participate in the 2022 ARCHES program. I am excited to explore my interest in medicine and grow as a servant-leader this summer. I am also more confident than ever that I will be able to transform all my years of hard work into a medical school acceptance. This program is a huge step towards my ultimate goal of improving mental health care for the Black community and America at large.